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REUTERS PRC RESTRICTING MOVEMENT OF FOREIGNERS

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(BY TIMOTHY PEARCE)

(EXCERPT) PEKING, FEB 15, REUTER--TRAVEL WITHIN CHINA FOR FOREIGN RESIDENTS IS BEING RESTRICTED AS THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN TO CRITICIZE THE LATE DEFENSE MINISTER LIN PIAO AND THE PHILOSOPHER CONFUCIUS GATHERS MOMENTUM, DIPLOMATIC SOURCES REPORTED TODAY.

THE CAMPAIGN HAS NOW GROWN INTO THE MOST WIDESPREAD MASS MOVEMENT IN CHINA SINCE THE 1966-69 CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

DIPLOMATS IN THE CHINESE CAPITAL HAVE BEEN REFUSED PERMISSION TO VISIT CITIES SUCH AS SHANGHAI AND HANGCHOW NORMALLY CONSIDERED PART OF THE ROUTINE "TOURIST ROUTE." ONE FOREIGNER WAS TOLD HE COULD NOT GO TO SHANGHAI BECAUSE THE CITY WAS "BUSY".

HOWEVER, DIPLOMATS WITH SPECIFIC BUSINESS IN SHANGHAI ARE BEING ALLOWED TO TRAVEL THERE, AND THERE IS NO SIGN THAT CHINESE AUTHORITIES ARE RELUCTANT TO GRANT EXIT VISAS FOR FOREIGN RESIDENTS WISHING TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ON HOLIDAY.

MEANWHILE REPORTS REACHING PEKING FROM THE PROVINCES SAID MASS RALLIES OF UP TO 100,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HELD IN KWANTUNG AND HUNAN PROVINCES TO PROMOTE THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN.

IN PEKING ITSELF ONE MASS RALLY WAS HELD EARLIER THIS WEEK, AND TODAY A CONVOY OF MORE THAN 100 BUSES AND TRUCKS PACKED WITH PEOPLE RUMBLED PAST ONE OF THE DIPLOMATIC COMPOUNDS AND DREW UP OUTSIDE AN INDOOR STADIUM, PRESUMABLY FOR ANOTHER MASS MEETING.

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